

inch of the way as you wind through cypress forests or cross open “prairies” exposed to the sun and wind. Paddling can be slow going and strenuous on shallow and/or narrow trails. You may have to get out of your canoe and push across peat blowups or shallow water.

- Water levels in the Okefenokee Swamp sometimes become too low to paddle on certain trails; when this occurs we will make every attempt to contact you before your trip.

You must plan ahead if you choose a trail that does not return to the same landing. Distance between landings:
■ Suwannee Canal Recreation Area to Kingfisher Landing by vehicle: 25 miles

- Suwannee Canal Recreation Area to Stephen C. Foster State Park: 75 miles

- Kingfisher Landing to Stephen C. Foster State Park: 95 miles

NOTE: Kingfisher Landing is a launch-only site. There are no facilities, except a composting toilet and sign-in kiosk. A private campground is located nearby.

What must I bring? What should I bring?

You MUST carry the following items, for your safety:
___ Coast Guard approved flotation device for each person (children 10 years and younger must wear at all times)

___ Portable toilet with disposable bags

___ Compass and map

___ Flashlight

___ Cook stove and fuel

You SHOULD carry the following items:
___ Extra flashlights and batteries

___ Trash bags

___ Rope for pulling canoe

___ First Aid Kit

___ Food (plus enough for one extra day)

___ Foul weather gear

___ Sleeping bag or blanket

___ Map of canoe trails

___ Insect repellant

___ Duct tape for emergency repairs

___ Spare paddle (tied to canoe/kayak)

___ Waterproof bags

___ Paddling gloves

___ Toilet paper

___ Free-standing tent

___ Cord to tie down tent

___ Bailer

___ Sun protection (SPF 15+, wide brim hat, light-colored long sleeve shirt and pants)

___ Drinking water (4-6 quarts per person each day, depending on weather). **We do not recommend that you drink swamp water.** Filtering is difficult due to suspended organic matter.

What kind of weather should I expect? Summer days are hot and humid with warm nights. Winter days range from the teens to 80 degrees, but mostly in the 50s and 60s. Nighttime temperatures can be near or below freezing and wind chills have reached -22 degrees. Spring and fall are unpredictable – be prepared for any weather extreme. We recommend you check local forecasts before leaving. Be aware that tropical storms in the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean will often affect weather in the swamp.

The rainy season is normally from June through September. Many summer afternoons end with localized thunderstorms. Lightning is probably the most dangerous feature of an Okefenokee experience. If you are in an exposed area, seek shelter immediately in a nearby shrub island without trees. Get away from the boat and stay low under the canopy.

What about other boats on the trails? Only one canoe party is allowed at each shelter! at one time, although you may cross paths with other party’s enroute to your stop. Of the 120 miles of boat trails in the swamp, 70 are also open to day-use motorboats under 10 horsepower. The motorboats will disturb you less if you pull to the side and allow them

to pass. We occasionally use airboats to maintain public facilities and conduct wildlife and water level surveys. As an airboat approaches, make sure we see you, then move to the side of the trail and stop so we can pass safely. We will idle by and will not accelerate until we have sufficient safe distance behind us. Airboats do not have any brakes and they cannot back up. Do not look in the direction of the airboat when it is accelerating as strong wind currents may blow small branches and leaves back.

What animals might I see on my trip? Wildlife abounds in the Okefenokee year round. Black bear move throughout the swamp seeking food on the islands. Otter are commonly seen during cold weather, when alligators are relatively inactive. Alligators are abundant and like to sun along the banks and floating peat mats. Open prairies are good places to view wading birds such as egrets, herons, white ibis, wood storks, and sandhill cranes, depending on the season. Prothonotary warblers and Grey catbirds dart through the scrub-shrub areas. Turkey vultures often circle overhead. Many species of hawks and some waterfowl also reside in the swamp.

How should I protect myself from animals? There is no need to fear snakes or alligators as long as you take normal precautions. Do not disturb or feed animals. Food attracts animals, so use good camp hygiene: pick up crumbs; secure food within raccoon-proof containers and/or hang away from an animals reach; do not wash dishes in the water. Make sure the path is clear before you step. If animals become too aggressive, they may have to be relocated. Help keep them in their home territory by following these guidelines. In general, mosquitoes are no problem except after dark; they are rarely encountered during the daytime. During summer months, biting flies can make a trip into the swamp unpleasant. Insect repellant is strongly recommended.

What if I am a guide or outfitter? If you charge any fees for trips into the Okefenokee, you are required to have a permit. We issue permits once annually, in the fall. You must apply ahead of time. For more information, call 912/496 3331. **NOTE:** Contact the refuge for a current list of authorized commercial guides and outfitters to help facilitate your trip.

Do I need a special permit to cross the Suwannee Sill? You no longer need a permit but you do need to get a number to put on your dashboard. Contact the refuge headquarters at 912/496 7366 or Stephen C. Foster State Park at 912/637 5274. Vehicles using the Sill for overnight trips MUST park at SC Foster State Park. Sill parking area is for day-use only and loading/unloading vehicles.

Mixons Hammock Youth Camp - Use of Mixons Hammock (west end of Billy’s Lake) is primarily for organized youth groups. Organized youth groups are defined as:

- Scout-type youth groups (Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts), 4-H groups, church groups, or other conservation and environmental education groups of primarily children (under age 18) with adequate adult supervision (age 21 and over).

Group size should be at least 5 youths but not more than 20 youths. Recommend one adult per five youths. Maximum group size of 25 people. Current rate is \$2 per person per night. A maximum of three nights on the Hammock per group visit is allowed. All groups must apply in advance as per wilderness canoe permit guidelines. Commercial outfitters may not reserve the Hammock but may accompany a group acting as a guide/interpreter.

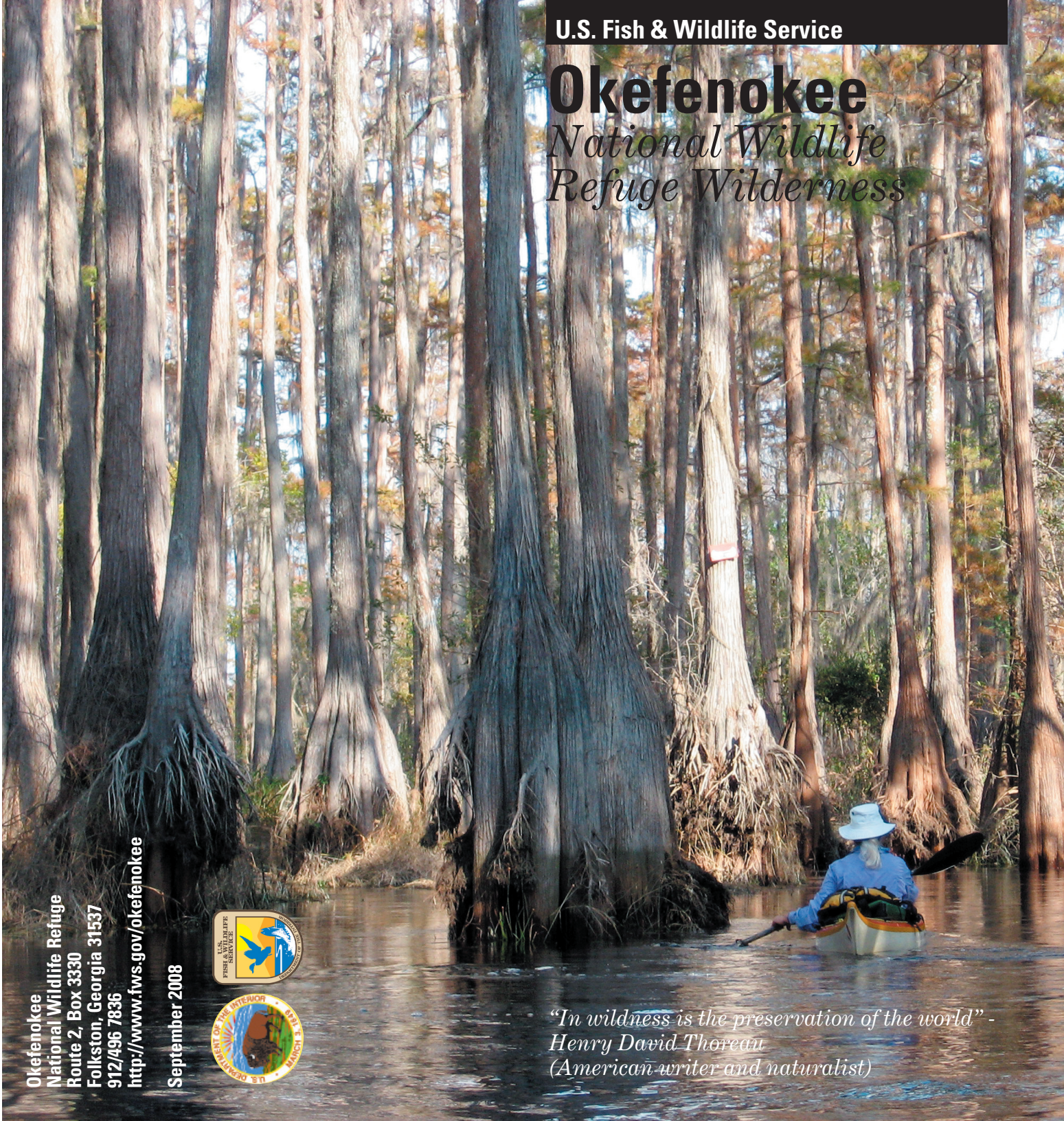
Entry and exit for this trip will be through Stephen C. Foster State Park unless otherwise permitted. All trips will be coordinated with State Park personnel on arrival and departure at the boat ramp.

Canoe trips to Mixons Hammock must be launched prior to 12 noon to assure reaching the campsite before dark. Campers will remove all gear/trash, etc. by 12 noon of their last day on the Hammock.

The composting toilet at Mixons Hammock is for overnight campers and day use visitors. It should be kept as clean as possible. Transport all trash and garbage out with the group.

Only members that are part of the organized group itself are permitted use of Mixons Hammock. No invitations should be extended to others to visit on the Hammock.

In 1981, the Secretary of the Interior designated over 100 miles of Okefenokee’s wilderness canoe trails as a National Recreation Trail in recognition of its local and regional significance. Through designation, these trails became part of America’s national system of over 1,000 trails.



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Okefenokee

National Wildlife Refuge Wilderness

Okefenokee
National Wildlife Refuge
Route 2, Box 3330
Folkston, Georgia 31537
912/496 7836
<http://www.fws.gov/okefenokee>

September 2008



“In wildness is the preservation of the world” - Henry David Thoreau (American writer and naturalist)

Please resend Canoe trail sign thanks



Red trail lily



Sandhill cranes

A canoe trip through the Okefenokee Swamp is an experience that you will remember for a lifetime. Alligators glide through water stained dark with tannic acid. Herons and egrets wade through tall grasses and water lilies. Bears meander through hammocks and islands. Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge is a haven for these and other animals – over 400,000 acres of wet prairies, cypress forests, and pine uplands. Most of the refuge is a nationally designated Wilderness Area, which offers a solitary and primitive experience. Seven overnight shelters plus a youth site are available in the swamp’s interior. Please read this brochure carefully and be sure you understand all of the procedures and regulations. Remember: it is your responsibility to be prepared for a wilderness experience, which may include temperature extremes, precipitation, high winds, high humidity, and other factors.

What Is Wilderness?

The open watery “prairies”, cypress-lined lakes, and scrub-shrub thickets of the Okefenokee are within the third largest National Wilderness Area in the Eastern United States. Wilderness is a unique place, untamed, where one can retreat from the civilized world and reconnect with nature and oneself. A visit to a National Wilderness Area is a special opportunity and different from camping in a park or campground. Do not expect amenities. Do expect an unparalleled opportunity for solitude, wildlife observation, and serenity. When you visit a wilderness area, you have certain responsibilities for yourself, your group, and for the resource. When you leave, there should be no evidence that you were ever here.

“What a country chooses to save is what a country chooses to say about itself” –Mollie Beatty, USFWS Director (1993 – 1996)

Leave No Trace Skills and Ethics

There are specific techniques you should know for minimizing your impact on the wilderness. For more information, contact the Visitor Center at 912/496 7836 or visit our website at <http://www.fws.gov/okefenokee>.

- **Plan ahead and prepare.** Make sure your expectations and skill match your destination. For example, at Okefenokee NWR, you are required to stay on trails and at designated campsites. Also, be prepared for weather extremes and emergencies. We will make every attempt to rescue you in an emergency, but wilderness rescues take longer than other areas. **Did Not Understand this sentence**
- **Concentrate your impact.** Stay on designated trails and campsites, leaving the remainder of the Okefenokee to the birds, alligators, bears, and other creatures. Traveling in small groups allows you more peace and solitude in the wilderness.
- **Dispose of waste properly.** Use port-a-lets and composting toilets. Use biodegradable soap when washing yourself or dishes. Dispose of wastewater in composting toilets.
- **Leave it as if you found it.** Do not harm or take trees, plants, artifacts, or animals. Do not leave anything behind to show you have passed through an area. Pack out ALL trash.
- **Use fire responsibly.** Camp stoves are required for overnight platforms. Campfires allowed only at Cravens Hammock, Floyds Island, Canal Run, and Mixons Hammock. Use only downed and dead wood and make sure your fire is out and cold when you leave.
- **Respect wildlife.** Do not approach too closely or harass or feed animals.
- **Be considerate of other visitors.** Avoid loud voices and noises. Be courteous to other paddlers.

How Can I Reserve A Permit?

Camping overnight in the Okefenokee Swamp is allowed only with a permit. You can reserve a permit only within two months to the date your trip begins. (Example: if you want to begin a trip on March 2, you may only call on or



Hooded trumpets



Dragonflies



Barred owl



Gopher frog

after January 2.) If the date falls on a weekend or federal holiday, reservations can be made the following business day. You can only reserve a permit by phone. Walk-in reservations will not be accepted. You must call 912/496 3331 between 7am and 10am eastern time, Monday through Friday (excluding Federal holidays). After 10am, you may request information, but you may not make a reservation.

Note: Your group will be limited to 20 people. The person who calls will be the designated group leader and is responsible for the group. Due to seasonal peak use and limited availability, trip lengths are limited to two nights during March and April.

After your permit reservation is taken:

- Send the nonrefundable fee of \$10.00 per person per night. (Example: 4 people x 2 nights x \$10.00 = \$80.00).
- **Motor boats are not a part of this experience. Groups will paddle in and out. Motor boats cannot be used to transport gear, food, etc. to your platform.** Use of Billys Lake and other boat trails and facilities is during regular hours only. No night use of the refuge is permitted for fishing, boating, etc.
- You must send the fee so that it is in our office within 16 calendar days of making your canoe reservations. (Example: If you make a reservation on November 14, we must have the fee in our office by November 30.)

- A cashier’s, certified or personal check, or money order must be made payable to: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- When payment is received, the trail permit will be mailed. Read the permit, sign both copies, keep the original (white copy) and immediately mail the yellow copy to the address below:

Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge Wilderness Canoe Permit Rt. 2 Box 3330, Folkston, GA 31537

We must have the signed, yellow copy before your trip begins! What are the Rules and Regulations? The following rules and regulations are in place to provide for your safety and enjoyment and the safety and enjoyment of other groups on the trail system. Your permit will contain these exact rules and regulations. You are required to sign the permit and state that you understand and will abide by these regulations.

1. The canoe permit must be carried by the group leader, who is responsible for the party knowing and following all regulations.
2. You must complete any additions or changes to your permit at least one week prior to departure. Notify the refuge headquarters or Visitor Center if the number of people taking the trip changes.
3. Entrance fees are included in the overnight canoeing permit fee but only for the days of your trip.
4. You may not lead guided trips without a Special Use Permit. Contact the refuge for more information.
5. Parties must launch from each site before 10am to ensure that the next overnight stop is reached before dark.
6. You and your party must register when you enter and leave the swamp and at each overnight stop.
7. You are required to bring a portable toilet with disposable bags for waste disposal and a camp stove and fuel for cooking.
8. You must follow exactly the route on your permit. You must not stray from assigned trail.
9. Only one party per night per stop is allowed.
10. Permit fees are **nonrefundable**.

11. Your licenses, permits, equipment and effects, including vehicles and canoes, are subject to inspection by county, state and federal officers.
12. Obey all state, federal and county laws regarding alcohol consumption. County regulations prohibit public intoxication.
13. You may not bring pets, swim, or wade in the swamp, due to danger from alligators.
14. Motors of any kind are not allowed on canoe trips.
15. Keep trails free from litter. Please pack out any litter you generate and any that you find.
16. Firearms or other weapons are prohibited in the refuge. No hunting.
17. All flora, fauna, and artifacts in the swamp are protected. **Do not feed or harass any animals or pick plants.**
18. You must remain at the designated overnight stop between sunset and sunrise.
19. You may stay only one night per stop.



Pitcher plant

20. Open fires are only allowed at Canal Run, Floyds Island, Cravens Hammock, and Mixons Hammock.

21. Parking placard provided by the refuge must be displayed in the windshield of any vehicle left overnight at any refuge entrance. Your permit number must be visible through the windshield.

What do I need to know to be prepared? A canoe trip through Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge is a wilderness experience. You may or may not encounter other parties on your trip.

It is your responsibility to be prepared for a trip, which may include temperature extremes, precipitation, high winds, high humidity and other factors. While you may choose to bring communication and navigational equipment (cell phones, GPS units) on a trip, this is not a substitute for proper preparation. Cell phone coverage may be inconsistent, batteries die, and equipment gets dropped or wet. In the event of a true emergency, we will make every effort to reach your party. Keep in mind that there are few places helicopters can land in the Okefenokee and local trauma units cannot land after dark. All rescues will be accomplished by boat and will likely take several hours from the time we are notified. We will be accompanied by or transport victims directly to EMS personnel. In cases of wildfires, hurricanes or other events, we will determine whether to evacuate all or some canoe trails. In some cases, you may simply be rerouted. It is imperative that you keep on the trail specified on your permit in case of serious events. We use prescribed fire as a management tool – do not be alarmed if you see smoke. You will be contacted if your group is in any danger from fire.

Before your trip:

- Check weather conditions, especially during hurricane season and winter months.
- Know the limitations of your group members. Discuss what you may do in an emergency.
- Identify strong paddlers who can go for help.
- Know first aid for hypothermia, heat exhaustion, and other common ailments. Pack first aid supplies.
- Leave a list of the people in your party with a close friend or relative.

During your trip:

- Use common sense.
- Stay on your designated trail.
- In case of emergency – stay calm.
- Know whom to call for help.

How should I plan my trip? You are allowed to camp only at the seven designated stops within the swamp; therefore, only seven groups may be in the swamp on a given night. Consider the skill level of individuals in your party before choosing a trail! The swamp terrain is flat; there is little fast water and dry land is scarce. Your paddle will be used every